1;Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

include, fish, goat, chicken, hare, mutton, buck, and even pork. Apparently carrion is never eaten. The flesh of the deer may be eaten but not that of the tiger. The villager is an adept at preparing vegetables for his curries, and throughout the year depends largely upon the following according to the seasons: *sags* of various kinds; egg plants; pumpkins and gourds; okra; potatoes, both ordinary and sweet; onions; roots of various plants; and corn on the cob roasted until it is brown.

The community feast, or feasts, given to a relatively large group on special occasions, are things which help to break the monotony of diet. Community feasts are usually paid for out of the proceeds of fines levied by the *panch*. An individual also may give a feast as a thank-offering, or at child-birth, at the time of a wedding, or at death. One of the favourite foods is said to be a preparation described below known as *bara*, and is served at every feast. If some social event should make a feast obligatory, and if the person concerned should fail to provide the expected meal, the *panch* brings pressure upon him to do so. If he still fails, the person is boycotted for a period. The usual menu at such a feast includes rice and *chapatis*, pulse, vegetable curry, *chatni*, *bara* and if they can be afforded, meats of various kinds. Kols drink milk when it is available and apparently do not feel that all milk should be kept for the calf, as some Munda tribes believe. Milk is also used in the preparation of certain special foods, such as *khir*, which is used for the child's first feeding. See below.

Foods are usually divided into two classes: *pakka* and *kachha*. The former kind is cooked in *ghi* or *ghi* is used in its preparation, and the latter is simply cooked with water. *Ghi*, like other products from the sacred cow, protects from impurity. While caste Hindus have numerous restrictions in conjection with this classification, the Kols do not seem to be particular in this regard. They will take food cooked by "clean" Hindu castes, but never from those castes which they consider below them, such as Chamars, Mahars, Dhobis, Basors, and Doms. Nowhere Kols seemed to be starved nor emaciated. Apparently, they have enough to keep them in fairly good health, though not in abundance. We did not find stout people among them.

The main food-stuffs are listed below. In an average Kol house all of these are probably not found at any one time, but they are those used when available:

Grains: Wheat, rice, millet (in northern areas).

Pulses: Black pulse (*Phaseolus radiatus*). Red and yellow types (*Cajanus indicus* and *Dolichos lablab*).

Oils: Mustard oil usually from *Guisotia abyssinica*. Sweet oil or

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basis of the black colour is soot. Sometimes this is obtained by burning certain kinds of wood and cocoanut shells. It is finely powdered and mixed with water. Sometimes milk from the breast is said to be a desirable solvent. After pricking, the parts are oiled with a mixture of *haldi* and *til* oil, which soothes the affected parts and removes any impurity from the touch of the tattooer.

Fig. 15

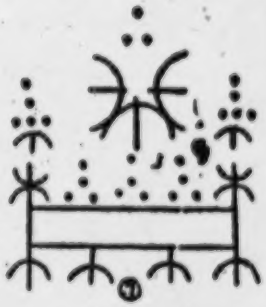

Fig. 16

AGRICULTURE. Kols mostly work as labourers in the fields of others, and even where they rent their fields, there is nothing in their methods which is not characteristic of the whole countryside. February to April is the usual slack season, although during the latter part of this period the wheat crop is harvested in Central India, and the threshing season is on. Before the rains at the end of June the ground is made ready for the first showers, and is roughly scratched with rude ploughs. Just before the rains the seed is broadcast in a prepared plot and is transplanted in the mud after the monsoon has broken. Only men sow the seed. From July to September the rice is growing and must be weeded and looked after. The weeding is generally done by women, but men also help. In October the rice is cut and threshed and stored. The soil, still moist from the monsoon rains, is now prepared for the wheat crop which is sown about the end of October or early in November. The wheat also requires weeding and care, and is ready for the harvest in late March and April. Religious observances in connection with agriculture are described in a later chapter.

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The Khangars of Central India have a tradition akin to the one related of the Thakuriyas, of a slaughter by a Bundela Rajput after they were made drunk.[1] This may be an altogether different story but probably belongs to the same period when the Rajputs came into Bundelkhand. No first-hand accounts were obtained by us which would shed any light on the origin of this *kurhi*.

5. *Garhvariya*. While this name occurs eight times in the list of Kol subdivisions nevertheless we found only one living specimen in spite of the fact that there were said to be many of this group around Jubbulpore. This particular Garhvariya came to us in a group of Thakuriyas and Rautiyas and was the butt of their jokes. He was short and dark and had a very flat nose, much broader than is usual with Kols. The other *kurhis* said to his face that they would have nothing to do with him socially. When asked about himself he said that he was a Rautiya who had the misfortune to be born out of Rewa State and hence was called a Garhvariya. The other Kols present would not agree that this was the real situation. Garhvariyas are considered unclean and no other sept will take their girls or give them their own daughters in marriage. They are mainly employed as field labourers. It is not unlikely that we met others, but they would not admit that they were Garhvariyas.

6. *Mawasi*. Very little was to be ascertained from the Kols about this group. They seem to be a very "low" *kurhi*, and do not even call in a Chamarin to act as midwife and cut the cord of the newly born infant, doing such work with their own hands. They are so low that no social intercourse is possible with Kols like Rautiyas and Thakuriyas. They are considered the most despised of all the Kols and "live just like Basors who are outcastes and make baskets and keep pigs."

The Munda tribe known as the Korkus and found in the Satpura hills of south central India are sometimes called Mowasis.[2] Regarding Korkus Russell and Hiralal state that the sept names of the Korkus are in many cases identical with those of the Kols and Korwas, which may mean that they are an offshoot of "the great Kol or Munda" tribe. The word "Mowasi" has reference to the largest of their subdivisions but its derivation is uncertain. The Census Report for the Central India Agency says : "The Mawasis were reputed to be a fighting section of the Kols."[3]

7. *Kathoriya*. This *kurhi* takes its name from *kathri*, a mattress

1 Russell and Hiralal, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 439.
2 *Ibid.* Vol. iii, p. 560.
3 *Census of India*, 1931, xx: i, p. 237.

1:Griffiths M-5 (ca. 1940) 1946 AW37 Kol AW37

[P.55]

CHAPTER IV

BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, PUBERTY

For the Kols there are certain very obvious turning points of life, and at such times Kols believe that evil is present, ready to render the outcome of events unfavourable. To Kols the anxiety is not merely one born of a physical crisis but goes deeper into their consciousness, for at such times favourable supernatural aid must be secured or the evil spirits will triumph over them. Hence at these turning points there are certain rites and ceremonies which must be observed and recourse should not be had to some newer unknown and untried method. Kols are unable to give a rational account of why they perform these rites; as far as they are concerned it is just the custom. Though in many cases the customs may have been adopted from Hinduism, it was so long ago that Kols are now altogether unconscious of it. It should be remembered, therefore, that many of the things described in this connection will also be found true of the village folk all over this part of Central India. An attempt has been made by long and patient enquiry to find out what the Kols themselves do on these important occasions, but we have not sought to compare them with other groups in this regard.

BIRTH CUSTOMS. *Pregnancy.* The pregnant mother is not considered unclean and there are no particular taboos placed upon her. She is allowed to go about her regular work and do all cooking and household duties without restriction. She may eat what she likes and there are no foods which she must avoid other than those a Kol never uses. She should be careful, however, not to go near places where *bhuts* and other evil spirits are known to lurk, they might attack her and as a result cause a miscarriage. When the woman comes to know that she is pregnant the matter is taken to the family goddess—*devi*—who is usually resident in one corner of the house and she is promised that she will receive an offering if she protects the mother and the unborn babe for the full time of pregnancy. After delivery, or often shortly before if all has gone well, the family will present to the *devi* the particular things that they had promised her. This may be an animal such as a goat, pig or chicken, or just a cocoanut. Again, the simple *hom* offering or fire sacrifice is common. This consists of an oblation of clarified butter (*ghi*) placed in the fire burning before the *devi*, the anointing of the wall with vermilion (*sendur*) and the

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Kols generally believe that the soul of the child enters and possesses its new body before the child is born. The more general opinion is that the movements of the child in the womb, which first occur about the sixth month, are the signs that the body has received its soul and is already a person. The soul is a gift to the child by Paramatma, and it enters the child's body through the mouth, nose or ears. The Kols' idea of the state and nature of the soul before entering the child's body is very vague and it is unusual to find any clear idea of transmigration and previous existence in another body.

Delivery. There is no uncleanness attached to the woman up to the time of the birth of her baby, but for six days thereafter she is considered unclean. The actual delivery of the child always occurs at home for no use is made of hospitals or the like.

When the time of birth is near the female relatives who have come for the occasion take charge of her. No male members of the family are allowed in the delivery room and men are kept out for the six days following. In a few places however we learned that they might enter after three days. Her mother-in-law and her sister are the ones to make the arrangements and do the actual work, although other female members of the two families may stand ready to assist. The woman awaits her time in a darkened room protected as far as possible from the entry of evil spirits. A few hours before (and sometimes just at the time) birth is expected a mid-wife—*dai*—is summoned. The Kols usually summon a Chamarin, or if she is not available, a Basorin. Sometimes, particularly around Jubbulpore, the Basorin seems to be preferred. If the birth should occur before the *dai* arrives the women in the house can do everything except the cutting of the umbilical cord. In one place we asked what would happen if the *dai* did not arrive and they replied that before a Kolin would cut the cord they would have to let the mother and baby die! Some Kols are said to do it themselves, but we did not find any who admitted that they do so. If the child should be born in a field the mother gathers up the child and the after-birth in her *sari* and carries it home and then the *dai* is called to cut the cord and care for the infant.

The birth usually occurs with the mother squatted on the floor, seated on her heels and bending over a large basket placed upside down on the floor, her head meanwhile resting on her hands. The female relatives support her and give encouragement. The *dai* is the one to receive the child. No one in the family should touch the child until it has first been purified by the *dai*. This applies to the mother as well. The *dai* cuts the umbilical cord with an iron instrument which

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513 823 Kols generally say that they, unlike the Hindus, are not particular about the direction of their head when they sleep. Inside their own houses they can make their couch in any direction. When they sleep outside, however, they should lie with their heads to the east. And yet, further questionings have revealed, that most Kols have a definite prejudice against sleeping with the head to the north, [764] whether inside or outside the house. No doubt this is because the dead are placed in that position.

231 825 [673 681] [627 574] ANIMALS AND TREES. *Animals.* Among the Kols there is an exaggerated respect for the cow and it is said that she is the most sacred of all animals. To kill a cow is to commit a great sin, much worse even than killing a Brahmin. In the strictest sense it is murder, and anyone killing a cow even accidentally should make a pilgrimage to the Ganges and offer a gift to the river. On his return he is required to give a feast to the community. Kols as a rule are not rich in cattle and those they possess are a poor lot.

825 [773] The palm squirrel (*Sciurus palmarum*), is very commonly found in the villages and frequents the houses of people. Kols have a great respect for this creature and some would even rank it above the cow, for, one said, to kill such an animal was as bad as killing a hundred Brahmins! Popular legend has it that when Rama was building his bridge from India to Ceylon in order to rescue Sita, these squirrels helped him by bringing dust on their tails. Rama was pleased with this act of devotion and stroked the backs of the squirrels and to this [627 574] day the marks of his hands can be seen in the black strips on their backs. Any one who happens to kill a squirrel should give a feast. Boys will never shoot nor molest them.

231 825 [183] The cat is likewise revered by Kols and is usually called *mai*, mother. In the ordinary sense Kols do not keep nor care for cats; they are just a part of the village and roam it freely in search of food while no one claims particular ownership. Sometimes they multiply to an alarming extent and in one village it was discovered that no chickens could be raised due to the presence of the cats who killed and ate the younger chickens. No effort was made to change this condition nor rid the village of the cats. That would be a breach of custom.

[783] The dogs too are the general property of the village. To Indian villagers the dog is often an impure animal, but this is not true in the case of the Kols, for the touch of the dog is not defiling. He is a village watchman, and in a sense a custodian of their safety, as he gives the village warning should strangers approach. To slay him is to slay